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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of	:	
Jen et al.	:	
Application No.: 10/077390	:	DECISION ON
Filing or 371(c) Date: 02/15/2002	:	PETITION
Attorney Docket Number:	:	
SJO920010053US1 (0506)	:	

This is a decision in response to the "Petition Under 37 CFR § 1.181 to Withdraw Holding of Abandonment," filed February 23, 2006. The delay in treating this petition is regretted.

This Petition is hereby dismissed.

Any further petition must be submitted within TWO (2) MONTHS from the mail date of this decision. Extensions of time under 37 CFR 1.136(a) are permitted. The reconsideration request should include a cover letter entitled "Renewed Petition under [insert the applicable code section]." This is not final agency action within the meaning of 5 U.S.C. § 704.

Background

The above-identified application became abandoned for failure to timely and properly reply to the Notice of Allowability, mailed September 2, 2005. The Notice required corrected drawings, and set a non-extendable three (3) month period for reply. No reply having been filed, the application became abandoned December 3, 2005. A Notice of Abandonment was mailed February 13, 2006.

The present petition

Applicant files the present petition and asserts that drawings were filed July 3, 2002. Applicant further states that it "informed the Examiner of the error on November 30, 2005 via voicemail..." Petition at p.1.

Applicable Law Rules and MPEP

The applicable statute, 35 U.S.C. § 133, Time for prosecuting application, states

Upon failure of the applicant to prosecute the application within six months after any action therein, of which notice has been given or mailed to the applicant, or within such shorter time, not less than thirty days, as fixed by the Director in such action, the application shall be regarded as abandoned by the parties thereto, unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the Director that such delay was unavoidable.

Abandonment takes place by operation of law for failure to reply to an Office action or timely pay the issue fee, not by operation of the mailing of a Notice of Abandonment. See Lorenz v. Finkl, 333 F.2d 885, 889-90, 142 USPQ 26, 29-30 (CCPA 1964); Krahn v. Commissioner, 15 USPQ2d 1823, 1824 (E.D. Va 1990); In re Application of Fischer, 6 USPQ2d 1573, 1574 (Comm'r Pat. 1988).

It is well settled that the use of "shall" in a statute is the language of command, and where the directions of a statute are mandatory, strict compliance with the statutory terms is essential. Farrel Corp. v. U.S. Int'l Trade Comm'n, 942 F.2d 1147, 20 USPQ2d 1912 (Fed. Cir. 1991).

This section of the statute is further clarified in Office rule 37 CFR § 1.135, Abandonment for failure to reply within time period, which states

- (a) If an applicant of a patent application fails to reply within the time period provided under § 1.134 and § 1.136, the application will become abandoned unless an Office action indicates otherwise.
- (b) Prosecution of an application to save it from abandonment pursuant to paragraph (a) of this section must include such complete and proper reply as the condition of the application may require. The admission of, or refusal to admit, any amendment after final rejection or any amendment not responsive to the last action, or any related proceedings, will not operate to save the application from abandonment.
- (c) When reply by the applicant is a bona fide attempt to advance the application to final action, and is substantially a complete reply to the non-final Office action, but consideration of some matter or compliance with some requirement has been inadvertently omitted, applicant may be given a new time period for reply under § 1.134 to supply the omission.

This section explains that a failure to reply will result in the abandonment of the application.

Applicant is reminded that all business with this Office must be conducted in writing. The applicable rule, 37 CFR 1.2 states:

All business with the Patent and Trademark Office should be transacted in writing. The personal attendance of applicants or their attorneys or agents at the Patent and Trademark Office is unnecessary. The action of the Patent and Trademark Office will be based exclusively on the written record in the Office. No attention will be paid to any alleged oral promise, stipulation, or understanding in relation to which there is disagreement or doubt.

Analysis

Applicant asserts that it informed the Examiner of the error on November 30, 2005 via voicemail; however, as stated above, all business should be conducted in writing. Moreover, Applicant did not file a response to the Notice. The MPEP 711.03(c), explaining unavoidable delay, proves instructive. It states:

Delay resulting from the lack of knowledge or improper application of the patent statute, rules of practice or the MPEP, however, does not constitute “unavoidable” delay. See Haines, 673 F. Supp. at 317, 5 USPQ2d at 1132; Vincent v. Mossinghoff, 230 USPQ 621, 624 (D.D.C. 1985); Smith v. Diamond, 209 USPQ 1091 (D.D.C. 1981); Potter v. Dann, 201 USPQ 574 (D.D.C. 1978); Ex parte Murray, 1891 Dec. Comm’r Pat. 130, 131 (1891). For example, as 37 CFR 1.116 and 1.135(b) are manifest that proceedings concerning an amendment after final rejection will not operate to avoid abandonment of the application in the absence of a timely and proper appeal, a delay is not “unavoidable” when the applicant simply permits the maximum extendable statutory period for reply to a final Office action to expire while awaiting a notice of allowance or other action. Likewise, as a “reasonably prudent person” would file papers or fees in compliance with 37 CFR 1.8 or 1.10 to ensure their timely filing in the USPTO, as well as preserve adequate evidence of such filing, a delay caused by an applicant’s failure to file papers or fees in compliance with 37 CFR 1.8 and 1.10 does not constitute “unavoidable” delay. See Krahn, 15 USPQ2d at 1825. Finally, a delay caused by an applicant’s lack of knowledge or improper application of the patent statute, rules of practice or the MPEP is not rendered “unavoidable” due to: (A) the applicant’s reliance upon oral advice from USPTO employees; or (B) the USPTO’s failure to advise the applicant of any deficiency in sufficient time to permit the applicant to take corrective action. See In re Sivertz, 227 USPQ 255, 256 (Comm’r Pat. 1985). (Emphasis supplied).

While this section refers to a final Office action, the principal is equally applicable to a Notice of Allowability. The applicable statute and rule do not differentiate between Office actions. The law states

Upon failure of the applicant to prosecute the application within six months after any action therein, of which notice has been given or mailed to the applicant, or within such shorter time, not less than thirty days, as fixed by the Director in such action, the application shall be regarded as abandoned by the parties thereto.... (Emphasis supplied).

The rule similarly states:

If an applicant of a patent application fails to reply within the time period provided under § 1.134¹ and § 1.136, the application will become abandoned unless an Office action indicates otherwise

¹ 37 CFR 1.134 states: “An Office action will notify the applicant of any non-statutory or shortened statutory time period set for reply to an Office action. Unless the applicant is notified in writing that a reply is required in less than six months, a maximum period of six months is allowed.” It does not differentiate as to the Office action.

Here, Applicant failed to file a reply to the Notice.

There is no disagreement as to the sufficiency of the reply, because no reply was filed. Since no timely or proper reply to the Office action was filed, the application is abandoned. As stated in the MPEP: Where there is no dispute as to whether an application is abandoned (e.g., the applicant's contentions merely involve the cause of abandonment), a petition under 37 CFR 1.137 (accompanied by the appropriate petition fee) is necessary to revive the abandoned application.

Alternate Venue

Applicant is urged to file a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) stating that the delay was unintentional. Public Law 97-247, § 3, 96 Stat. 317 (1982), which revised patent and trademark fees, amended 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) to provide for the revival of an "unintentionally" abandoned application without a showing that the delay in was "unavoidable."

The filing of a petition under 37 CFR 1.137(b) cannot be intentionally delayed and therefore must be filed promptly. A person seeking revival due to unintentional delay can not make a statement that the delay was unintentional unless the entire delay, including the delay from the date it was discovered that the application was abandoned until the filing of the petition to revive under 37 CFR 1.137(b), was unintentional. A statement that the delay was unintentional is not appropriate if petitioner intentionally delayed the filing of a petition for revive under 37 CFR 1.137(b).


Further correspondence with respect to this matter should be addressed as follows:

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Telephone inquiries concerning this Decision should be directed to the undersigned at (571) 272-3232.


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